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PUBLIC HEALTH REPORTS.

PLAGUE INFECTION IN SQUIRRELS.

Laboratory experiments have demonstrated that ground squirrels can be infected with plague, and a few cases of such infection have been reported.

On account of the great numbers of ground squirrels in California and other states, their infection, though quite limited so far as a systematic search has revealed, has given rise to reasonable apprehension, and a knowledge of their habits and the best methods of destroying them is deemed of special importance.

Because of their devastating effect upon grain and other crops, the Biological Survey of the Agricultural Department has for a long time made a special study of these rodents, and Doctor Merriam, the Chief of the Biological Survey, has kindly responded to a request to prepare a bulletin giving the information necessary for dealing with these pests from a sanitary as well as an agricultural standpoint.

Attention is particularly called to his statement of the effect of the natural enemies of the ground squirrel upon their prevalence, as well as the proven methods of their destruction by artificial means. These observations have been the result of study and practical methods successfully utilized by the survey. As stated by Doctor Merriam, it is now a matter of importance, both from a sanitary, as well as an economic standpoint, that a systematic destruction of these pests should be entered upon.

CALIFORNIA GROUND SQUIRRELS.

By C. HART MERRIAM, Chief U. S. Biological Survey.

California is overrun with ground squirrels, no less than three genera and a dozen species occurring within its borders. These may be arranged in four groups: (*a*) the large, long-eared gray ground squirrels (subgenus *Otospermophilus*); (*b*) the small, short-eared brownish species (genus *Citellus*); (*c*) the small, white-striped antelope ground squirrels of the deserts (genus *Ammospermophilus*); (*d*) the golden-mantled ground squirrels of the mountains (genus *Callospermophilus*).

The ground squirrels rank among the most destructive of our native rodents, causing losses to agriculture amounting to at least \$10,000,000 annually. In Oregon, Washington, Montana, and other parts of the West the most harmful species are the short-tailed ones, but in California the only ones of marked economic importance are the long-eared gray or "digger" squirrels. These are relatively large animals, about